

Huskies Finish Season in Exciting Fashion

By Bruce Smith
MatchupUT.com

Many of the Hillcrest Huskies football players saved their best efforts for their last game. While it resulted in an exciting game, the Huskies ended up on the down side, dropping a wild 51-35 contest to American Fork in a Region 4 game.

Hillcrest finished the season 2-8 overall and 0-6 in region. The region win put the Cavemen in fifth place.

"Our kids came out with nothing to lose," said Hillcrest coach **Kirk Merhish**. "The reality was we were both in the same boat."

QB **Tanner Kemp** had one of his best games of the season, completing 20 of 33 passes for 299 yards and four touchdowns. **Matt Pecht** and **Matt Augustyn** had big nights receiving, each with six catches. Pecht finished with two touchdowns, and Augustyn had one.

The Huskies put together one of their finest efforts offensively in the second quarter, scoring 22 points in just over three minutes. Unfortunately, American Fork returned a pair of kickoffs for scores in



Matt Pecht tries to get past an American Fork defender and gain extra yardage on this pass reception.

that time period, and stayed ahead.

"It was a wild game, but I was really proud of the kids' effort," Merhish said. "They left it all out on the field."

American Fork did its damage with kickoff returns and running the ball. RB Cade Zarbock had one of his best days of the season with 157 yards on 15 carries. Combined, the Cavemen had 330 yards on the ground.

Zarbock and Ethan Wright returned kickoffs for scores. Those were important, too. With

American Fork leading 14-6 after the first quarter, Kemp brought the Huskies back with a touchdown pass to **Liam Smith**, and then connected with Pecht for a pair of scores.

The Huskies tied the game 28-28 when **Connor Phelps** hit **Kaleb Kirmer** with a two-point conversion pass. American Fork had just enough time, however, to move the ball downfield and kick a field goal just before halftime.

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HILLCREST FOOTBALL: American Fork 51, Huskies 35

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AF's Chase Hansen then gave the Cavemen more momentum, and it turned out to be the turning play of the game, when he recovered a fumble early in the third period and returned it 38 yards for a touchdown.

"That took the wind out of our sails," said Merhish.

The Huskies didn't score again until 2:12 remained when Kemp hit Augustyn with a touchdown throw.

But it still was a great effort. Hillcrest's offense accumulated 407 yards. RB **Trae Kranz** was the top runner with 60 yards on 11 carries.

On defense, Smith had 14 tackles and **Dylan Ford** 13. **B.J. Edman** had nine. Phelps punted four times and averaged an amazing 51.2 yards per kick.

SCORING SUMMARY

American Fork 14 17 7 13 - 51
Hillcrest 6 22 0 7 - 35
AF – Ethan Wright 18 pass from Ryan Pitcher (Pat Bowen kick)
H – Liam Smith 8 pass from Tanner Kemp (kick failed)
AF – Wright 25 pass from Pitcher (Bowen kick)
H – Kemp 2 run (Jeff Brown kick)
AF – Wright 95 kickoff return (Bowen kick)
H – Matt Pecht 34 pass from Kemp (Brown kick)
AF – Cade Zarbock 92 kickoff return (Bowen kick)
H – Pecht 35 pass from Kemp (Kaleb Kirmer pass from Connor Phelps)
AF – FG Bowen 31
AF – Chase Hansen 38 fumble return (Bowen kick)
AF – Kaiden Worthington 1 run (Bowen kick)
AF – Worthington 7 run (kick failed)
H – Matt Augustyn 11 pass from Kemp (Brown kick)

GAME FACES



Lucas Li



Hunter Adams



Nick Merhish



Hunter Park



Taylor Bagley



John Delaney



Cole Christensen